

# The Twin



Identical twins have always caused people to look in fascination at the strangeness that two identical people have; individuals who appear to be one person.

About a third of the world's estimated 100 million twins are *monozygotic* - identical, coming from a single fertilized egg which divides into two in utero. These twins are identical in every genetic detail, right down to birthmarks and fingerprints. Differences between them must be shaped by the individuals themselves and are exclusively non-genetic.

But there exists a strange world between these twins, and a stranger one exists between identical twins who, for one reason or another, were separated at birth and brought up totally apart, usually without the knowledge of each other's existence.

The "Jim Twins" are a fascinating example of separated identical twins. At five weeks they were adopted by different families who were each told the other twin had died at birth. Raised 130 kms apart they eventually met when they were 39 years old.

Both boys were named James, both grew up with adopted brothers called Larry. Both were good at maths and hated spelling and both had owned dogs called Troy. Both had married girls called Linda, divorced and then married "Bettys". Their first sons were named respectively, James Allan and James Alan. Both families holidayed at the same small beach in St Petersburg, Florida for years, driving there in Chevrolets. Both Jims had worked as petrol pump attendants, deputy sheriffs, and at one time in the same hamburger chain. They shared the same nail biting, eating, drinking and sleeping habits and both shared the same hobbies of carpentry and technical drawing.

Jeanette Hamilton and Irene Reid were put up for adoption in 1944 by their unmarried mother. In August 1979, the sisters met each

other for the first time. They discovered they were both terrified of heights, were compulsive calculators (if they saw a truck they counted the wheels on it); both suffered from claustrophobia and had both worked for the same cosmetics firm. They both had such an aversion to water that they sat with their backs to the ocean when visiting the beach. They got a pain in the same spot in the right leg in wet weather.

In 1979 Bridget Harrison and Dorothy Lowe discovered they were identical twins. They found bizarre synchronicity run through their lives. They had married within a year of each other and had worn identical wedding dresses. One had called her son Richard Andrew and the other Andrew Richard. Bridget's daughter was called Catherine Louise, Dorothy's was Karen Louise (Dorothy wanted to call her Katherine, but called her Karen to please a relative). Both had studied piano to the same grade and stopped after taking the same exams. Both collected soft toys, had cats called Tiger and had contracted meningitis. They both kept a diary for one year - 1960 - and the diaries were the same make and colour. The entries they had made matched day for day. Both wore seven bangles on one wrist and a watch and bracelet on the other.

## Synchronised Twins

One of the most striking cases of highly synchronised separated twins is that of Oscar Stohr and Jack Yufe, born in Trinidad in 1933 and separated shortly afterwards when their parents quarreled. Oscar went to Germany with his mother where he became an ardent Nazi. With profound irony Jack was reared a Jew by his father, attending synagogue. They met each other 46 years later and discovered their habits were identical.

Both flush the toilet before and after using it; store rubber bands on their wrists and read over meals, which they prefer to eat alone. They dip buttered toast into their coffee and read magazines from back to front. Both like to scare people in lifts by sneezing loudly, have moustaches and wear wire-rimmed glasses.

Most twins start to develop their own individual personalities by their early teens. However, some twins fail in this separation and continue to grow as if they are one person.

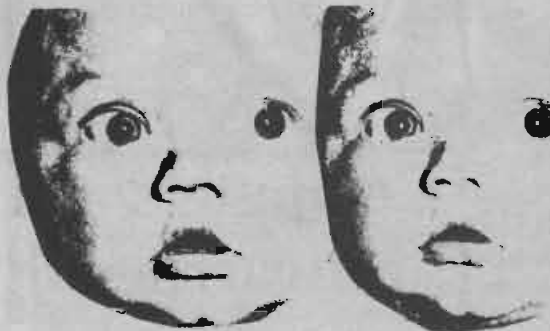
Greta and Freda Chaplin are one of the best examples of this phenomenon. Discovered in 1980 at the age of 38, they were brought before a magistrate in York, England for harassing a neighbour. What fascinated the psychiatrists and journalists was that the twins spoke in what appeared to be *precise synchronisation*. On further investigation more examples of their behaviour implied they were effectively one person. They were a familiar sight in York and kids, believing them to be witches, threw stones and spat at them. Adults went out of their way to avoid them.

They both wore identical grey coats; one originally came with green buttons, the other with grey. They automatically cut off two buttons each; now both coats have two green and two grey. When they were given different coloured gloves they simply took one from each pair. A gift of different coloured bars of soap caused them real anguish and they burst into tears. The problem was solved when the bars were cut in half.

## Mirror Imaging

They also exhibit "mirror imaging", characteristically found in monozygotic twins. In typical cases of mirror imaging, one twin is right handed, the other left; whorls of hair grow clockwise in one and anti-clockwise in

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the other; the left thumb print almost matches the right thumbprint of the other. The Chaplins dress in mirror image, right down to bracelets on opposite wrists; if one breaks a shoelace the other pulls the lace out of the opposite shoe.

But this particular behaviour could in part be attributed to their upbringing. Their parents actively encouraged their togetherness and similarity and they were not allowed any friends. Both parents were friendless and uncommunicative, with Mrs Chaplin being excessively house-proud. The twins' only apparent pleasure is bathing together and washing each other's long hair. It is estimated they use 14 bars of soap and three large bottles of shampoo each week.

They now live in a hostel for the mentally handicapped.

## Ideoglossia

Grace and Virginia Kennedy were born in 1970 in Georgia USA. They developed a unique and private language between themselves, with highly original vocabulary and syntax. This phenomenon is known as *ideoglossia*.

The twins suffered apparent seizures as babies and at 17 months started to speak rapidly in a language of their own. The only English they spoke was 'Mummy' and 'Daddy' and they called each other 'Poto' and 'Cabenga'. In 1977 the Children's Hospital in San Diego, California started speech therapy in a study of the twins, in the hope of learning something about the mysteries of language development. As they grew older they suddenly began to speak English, but have never revealed the meaning of their private language.

## Shared Illness & Injury

Shared illnesses and injuries amongst twins is a common phenomenon, even when they are miles apart.

Since 1953, Professor Luigi Gedda of the Gregor Mendel Institute in Rome has conducted a study on more than 15,000 pairs of twins. He has a "clock-of-life" hypothesis to account for the extraordinary correspondences in the lives of twins. Transmission of pain, physical wounds, carbon copy accidents - all of which defy rational or scientific explanations.

In 1948, Alice Lambe, a 20 year old typist, sat reading in the parlour of her family home. At 4.35 p.m. she felt an enormous jolt on the left side of her body, then a sharp stabbing pain and a feeling of shock. The impact of this "feeling of a blow" knocked her off her chair. She called out to her father and just before she passed out said "something has happened to Diane".

Diane, her identical twin was 110 kms away in another town for the day. The train she was travelling home in was derailed and she was thrown across the carriage, suffering two fractured ribs. Diane took two weeks off work as a result of her injuries. The strange thing was that Alice also took two weeks off work, complaining of pains in her chest. Eventually Alice was x-rayed and it was discovered that she also had two fractured ribs in the same place as Diane.

In 1975 Nettie Porter was involved in a car crash. Her identical twin Nita Hurst was at work 700 kms away. Suddenly she felt stabbing pains in her left leg. She rolled up her trousers and was amazed to see bruises appearing up her leg. The matron in the hospital at which she worked bore witness to this phenomenon and the bruises corresponded to Nettie's injuries.

Silva Landa burnt herself on an iron. 20 kms away her twin Marta felt the pain and blistered in the same spot. Both have scars.

Helen Fry, aged 13, was out shopping with her grandmother. Suddenly she started to stagger around dazed. On arriving home she promptly fell asleep. Her twin, Lorraine, was in hospital having a minor operation; both children had experienced the general anaesthetic. Jayne Wilkinson aged five fell over and broke her nose, her twin Claire had a nose-bleed.

## Even in Death

Sometimes pain transference in twins can be fatal; sisters Helen and Peg are a case in point. One night Helen woke screaming and white-faced with a terrible pain in her chest. She managed to reach her father before passing out, but died in the ambulance on the way to hospital - as did Peg who had been in a car accident at exactly the same time Helen awoke. She died from massive injuries caused by the steering wheel penetrating her chest.

The examples of synchronicity in twins' lives go on forever. These are just some cases from around the world, based on research done in this field by Professor Luigi Gedda of the Gregor Mendel Institute in Rome.

Identical twins are fascinating to all of us who are *not* one. They have been the source of much study to see whether environment and social patterns or genetics are a primary cause for their similarity; they've also been studied to illuminate the nature of telepathy. Identical twins are the closest humanity comes to cloning without genetically tampering with nature. Perhaps they hold more secrets than we know.

by Nissa

